



Jobs and Income Support for Workers Displaced by Hurricane Katrina

Frequently Asked Questions

Tuesday, September 6, 2005

How is DOL helping those who have been put out of work by Hurricane Katrina?

The Department is responding with 3 major income support programs:

- National Emergency Grants (NEGs) to create temporary jobs that provide paychecks to dislocated workers and help recovery efforts;
- Unemployment Insurance (UI);
- Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

How many NEG grants have been made after Hurricane Katrina?

- \$191.1 million in National Emergency Grants have already been awarded to create more than 40,000 temporary jobs in the region:
 - \$4 million for Alabama awarded on August 31, 2005;
 - \$50 million for Mississippi awarded on September 2, 2005;
 - \$62.1 million for Louisiana awarded on Sept. 3, 2005;
 - And \$75 million for Texas on Sept. 6, 2005 to serve Louisiana evacuees.
 - As soon as a NEG grant is approved funds are transferred to the state.

Is DOL going to give NEG grants to states that have taken in displaced persons?

- Yes. States accepting evacuees can apply for National Emergency Grants to serve individuals displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

How does one participate in the NEG grant jobs program?

- Individuals dislocated as a result of Hurricane Katrina are eligible for jobs funded by National Emergency Grants, as well as other dislocated workers, and the long-term unemployed.

How much will NEG grant jobs pay?

- Participants may earn up to \$12,000 and work for a six-month period.
- Overtime and fringe benefits can be added on top of the base.
- Wages can be increased for specialized jobs.
- Workers must be paid prevailing wages for comparable jobs.
- The state can request a waiver to extend the six-month period.

How soon will these jobs be available?

- As soon as a NEG is approved, funds are transferred to the state to begin the process of recruitment and deployment.

If these jobs require specialized skills, how will you get training to people?

- Skilled individuals are usually hired to serve as work site supervisors to help provide on-the-job training to bring lower skilled workers up to speed as quickly as possible.

- Most NEG funds support lower-skilled workers in temporary “laborer” jobs to complete clean up work.

How will people find out about these jobs?

- DOL has set up a 24/7 toll free number (1-866-4-USA-DOL) where displaced persons can find out how to apply for these jobs *or* how to apply for unemployment and disaster unemployment insurance. States are setting up toll free numbers, as well.

What is the difference between Unemployment Insurance and Disaster Unemployment Assistance?

- Both programs provide unemployment benefits for 26 weeks.
- But after a natural disaster, some workers are affected who are normally not eligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits. Disaster Unemployment Assistance is for them.

How are you locating evacuees eligible for unemployment insurance and disaster unemployment assistance?

- State and local workforce staff members are reaching out to evacuees at FEMA sites, community colleges, churches, community centers, evacuee sites.
- Mobile units are being deployed.
- Teams are going neighborhood to neighborhood with laptops to take claims.
- It is not necessary to return home to file a claim. Individuals can call the toll-free help line 1-866-4-USA-DOL, or go to www.dol.gov, for the location of the nearest site to make a claim.

How are you going to deliver unemployment checks to people whose homes have been destroyed and who have been relocated?

- The majority of survivors in all 3 states have relocated to areas where they can both receive and cash checks.
- In all evacuee centers, state workforce agency staff is making arrangements with local banks to cash UI checks, provide ATM cards and service vouchers.
- If there is no mail service, checks are held in central locations convenient to displaced persons.
- DOL is taking steps to empower states sheltering displaced persons to make Unemployment Assistance and Disaster Unemployment Assistance payments to survivors.

How long will it take realistically to get unemployment insurance benefits to Hurricane Katrina survivors?

- Claims are already being processed.
- More than 10,000 evacuee claims have been processed in Texas; Tennessee expects to process about 40,000 claims; and 3,419 evacuee claims have been processed in Georgia.

What will happen to displaced workers unable to provide any documentation about where they worked?

Waivers have been granted so that workers caught in these circumstances can get their benefits.

Is the Department helping the recovery effort in any other way?

OSHA has mobilized teams of technical experts to help workers involved in the dangerous job of trimming trees, cleaning debris, and restoring electrical power avoid further loss of life.